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CONAN THE KING
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AUTHORITY

Stan Lee PRESENTS

NIGHT VENGEANCE

FIFTEEN LEAGUES NORTH OF TARANTIA...

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AGAINST HIS BETTER JUDGMENT, KING CONAN HAD SENT A DELEGATION TO **ALUVIA**, A BARONY IN NORTHERN AQUILONIA.

THEIR MISSION WAS TO NEGOTIATE A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE TROUBLES BETWEEN THAT BARONY AND THE CROWN.

THE DELEGATION WAS SLAUGHTERED TO THE MAN.

REPORT, THADDEUS!

'TIS THE WORK OF ***TIMON FLAVIUS***, LORD CONAN, FLAVIUS LEADS A REVOLUTIONARY FACTION THAT SEEKS ALUVIA'S SECESSION FROM AQUILONIA!

FLAVIUS IS ALSO COUSIN TO BARON AEMILIUS!

YOU ***REMEMBER***, DON'T YOU, CONAN?

'TWAS ***FLAVIUS'S*** DOOR YOU KICKED IN THE DAY OF HIS SON'S PRESENTATION!*

*CTK #23. --PAT

I SAY WE BUY FLAVIUS A NEW DOOR AND BE DONE WITH IT--

MY LORD CONAN--!!

-- THERE BE SIGNS OF A REBEL SCOUT IN THE AREA--!

-- THOUGH WE'VE YET TO FIND HIM--

:GULP!:

A... BLACK DRAGON!

THERE'S OUR SPY, EH?

TAKE HIM TO THE TENT, KEPCHOE.

SYAN-LIN... FIND MY SON. I WANT HIM TO SEE THIS.

HE HAS LIVED HIS ENTIRE LIFE IN A FAR EASTERN LAND

HE IS A PEASANT BOY OF HUMBLE MEANS.

HE IS ALSO THE SON OF CONAN THE KING.

KANG SHO--!

(YOUR FATHER REQUIRES YOUR PRESENCE.)

(THANK YOU, SYAN-LIN.)*

* TRANSLATED FROM KHITAN,--PAT

IN HIS NATIVE LAND, KANG SHO HAS KNOWN WAR AND STRIFE NEARLY ALL HIS LIFE.

HE'S NEVER GOTTEN USED TO IT.

:GASP!:

TIMON FLAVIUS, YOUR REBEL LEADER.
WHERE IS HE?
(FATHER--!)
I... I DO NOT KNOW...
...I AM BUT A LOWLY SCOUT...
THAT'S A SHAME.
KANG SHO WAS BORN OF A CASUAL AFFAIR BETWEEN HIS MOTHER AND THE VISITING KING OF AQUILONIA.
YYEEARRGH!
HE AND HIS MOTHER HAVE JOURNEYED HERE TO FINALLY MEET HIS FATHER.
AAARGH!
KANG'S FOUND MORE THAN HE BARGAINED FOR.
LEAVING SO SOON, KANG?
YOUR FATHER HASN'T EVEN BEGUN HIS MORE CREATIVE WORK.
PRESENTLY..
I HAVE FLAVIUS'S LOCATION.
WHERE'S MY SON?
WHICH ONE?
NOW THAT YOU KNOW THAT CONN--YOUR TRUE HEIR--IS ALIVE IN KHITAI, WHY AREN'T YOU GOING AFTER HIM...
...INSTEAD OF TRYING TO REPLACE HIM WITH THAT COUNTERFEIT?
I'VE SENT SCOUTS, PROSPERO--
SCOUTS.
A YEAR OF RAGE AND REMORSE, AND YOU SEND SCOUTS.

KANG TELLS US ONCE THE PRINCE DISCOVERED YOUR INFIDELITY TOWARDS THE QUEEN, HE *SWORE* NEVER TO RETURN TO AQUILONIA.

'TWOULD SEEM YOU'VE SOME FENCE-MENDING TO DO!

BAH!

*CTKA #26--PAT.

*HE'S SENT SCOUTS TO INVESTIGATE KANG SHO'S CLAIM, HE'S HAD HIS HOPES DASHED TOO MANY TIMES.

*AND THEN, IF KANG'S REPORT IS TRUE...IF CONN DESPISES HIM...

...*THAT* HE'D RATHER NOT THINK ABOUT.

〈MY APOLOGIES, LORD.〉

〈YOUR... INQUISITION... WAS A BIT *INTENSE*.〉

〈I AM NOT USED TO SUCH... TACTICS.〉

〈SOMETIMES IT IS NECESSARY TO DO UNPLEASANT THINGS, SON. ESPECIALLY IN TIMES OF *WAR*.〉

〈IN ORDER TO PREVENT BLOODSHED ON A *GRAND* SCALE...〉

〈...IT IS OFTEN NECESSARY TO *SHED* BLOOD ON A MUCH NARROWER SCALE.〉

〈GOOD NEWS, THOUGH. I HAVE LOCATED TIMON FLAVIUS, THE REBEL LEADER.

〈COME ALONG, CONN.〉

〈MY LORD...〉

〈...I AM NOT CONN...〉

DAYS LATER...

IT'S YOUR FAULT!!

NICE TRY, SISTER RADEGUND, BUT THIS NEW TROUBLE BETWEEN FATHER AND MOTHER IS ENTIRELY YOUR DOING!

MINE, TAURUS?!

SURE! 'TWAS YOU WHO FOUND OUR KHITAN HALF-BROTHER WANDERING THE CASTLE HALLS!

THE FOOL HAS A CRUSH ON YOU...

...ODD AS THAT SOUNDS...

UNBEKNOWST TO THE BATTLING SIBLINGS, THEY ARE BEING OBSERVED BY A STRANGE VISITOR.

A CHANGELING WHO HAS COME ON A DEADLY MISSION...

TOAD!

I SHOULD BREAK YOUR ONE GOOD FOOT!

HEY!

DON'T BLAME ME 'CAUSE YOU'VE RUINED YOUR "BELOVED DADDY'S" MARRIAGE...!!

MEANWHILE, IN THE NEXT ROOM...

CONAN NEEDS TO QUELL THIS REBELLION QUIETLY AND DECISIVELY, ALUVIA'S ALLIED PROVINCES WILL MOST LIKELY JOIN IN THEIR SECESSION...

...THEN THINGS WILL GET VERY NASTY VERY SOON.

SOONER THAN YOU KNOW, PROSPERO. WE'VE JUST RECEIVED OFFICIAL NOTICE... KOBE'S COMING.

KOBE?! NOW?! WHY?!!

WHO KNOWS, MALORIC! BY MY MORTAL SOUL, THE KHITAN WARLORD NEVER GIVES ADEQUATE WARNING!

AYE... AND HE ALWAYS COMES WITH A BLASTED ARMY!

SO, WE HAVE ALUVIA ON THE ONE HAND, KOBE ON THE OTHER...

MITRA! WHAT THE BLAZES IS ALL THAT RACKET OUT IN THE HALL--!!

SILENCE, YOU MOTHERLESS CURS, OR I'LL--

YOU'LL WHAT, MALORIC?

PRINCE TAURUS!

MY MOST SINCERE APOLOGIES, O' RADIANT SON OF THE MORNING--!

I HAD NO IDEA--

I'M GOING TO SEE MOTHER!

THEN OFF WITH YOU! GO RUIN SOMONE ELSE'S DAY!

...O' KNIGHT OF AQUILONIA..., BEGOTTEN OF THE MOST HIGH...

AND JUST WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT, FAT MAN?

LISTEN TO ME, YOU LITTLE RODENT.

I HELPED PUT YOUR FATHER ON HIS THRONE.*

I FEAR NEITHER HIM NOR YOU.

LEAST OF ALL YOU.

WATCH YOUR STEP.

*CTK #20.-- PAT

AYE.

WHAT HE SAID.

MEANWHILE...

YES, PRINCESS RADEGUND, YOUR MOTHER IS ONCE AGAIN INSIDE MITRA'S TEMPLE!

THANK YOU, LYSANDER.

ZENOBIA WAS A NEMEDIAN KING'S CONCUBINE WHEN SHE FIRST LAID EYES ON CONAN.

IN THE YEARS THAT HAVE FOLLOWED, SHE'S COME TO REALIZE CONAN IS A DIFFICULT MAN TO LOVE.

WEEKS AGO, A SON CONAN SIRED WHILE ZENOBIA WAS BEING HELD HOSTAGE, APPEARED ON THEIR DOORSTEP.

THIS IS THE BOY'S MOTHER--

--KANG LOU-DZE.

FORGIVE MY INTRUSION, HIGHNESS.

YOU COME TO THIS SHRINE MOST EVERY DAY.

YES, KANG LOU-DZE. I HAVE MUCH TO PRAY FOR.

WOULD THAT I COULD UNDO THE HARM MY SON AND I HAVE CAUSED...

YOU AND... YOUR SON... HAVE DONE *NOTHING*.

THIS GRIEF IS MY *HUSBAND'S* DOING.

NO OTHER WORDS ARE SPOKEN. KANG LOU-DZE MAKES HER EXIT.

PRINCESS.

H... HELLO.

MOTHER.

MY CHILD.

MOTHER... EVERYTHING IS SO *BAD!!*

WILL WE... WILL OUR FAMILY SURVIVE?!

I'D SAY *THAT*...

"... IS UP TO YOUR *FATHER*."

NIGHT...

(WELL, SON, THERE HE IS...)

<...KOBE, LORD OF THE HOUSE OF YAGYU!>

<HE ALWAYS TRAVELS WITH A *HORDE*. I ASSUME IT'S TO *IMPRESS* PEOPLE.>

<HE NEVER MAKES A PROPER APPOINTMENT.>

<THEN AGAIN, NEITHER DO I.>

<BEWARE, LORD! I FEAR TREACHERY!>

<HE CARRIES THE BANNER OF *GENJIS*!>

<I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANYONE NAMED "GENJIS", BOY.>

<COME, LET'S NOT KEEP THE LITTLE RUNT WAITING.>

(CENTUS IS A MAD OVERLORD, SHE, HE AND HIS HORDE SWEEP ACROSS MY HOMELAND.)

(IF YOU DO NOT *JOIN* HIM YOU ARE *EXECUTED*)

(CENTUS IS A VICIOUS RUTHLESS KILLER MY LORD! IF YOUR FRIEND KOBE IS IN *LEAGUE* WITH HIM...)

(KOBE CAN BE CALLED *MANY* THINGS BOY)

(*"MY FRIEND" ISN'T ONE OF THEM*)

ZURI

(LORD KING CONAN

WELCOME TO THE MASTER'S.

HAVE IT

(LORD KANG SHO.)

(H-HOW

(DID YOU KNOW MY NAME

ANNEKA

(LORD KING

IT'S BEEN QUITE

THAT IT WAS)

(KANG SHO, PLEASED TO MEET YOU)

(I AM *ANNEKA*, WIFE TO LORD KOTH

ALL RIGHT, KOBE

OUT WITH IT

STILL NO STOMACH FOR DIPLOMACY, EH, CONAN?

GENJIS!!

<IT IS HE!! AS A BOY I SAW HIM!!>

<HIS HORDES SLAUGHTERED AND BURNED VILLAGE AFTER VILLAGE-->

<HOLD ON, BOY>

<GENJIS!! YOU MURDEROUS FIEND!!>

<YOU BETRAY YOUR OWN BROTHERS!!>

<I BETRAY NO ONE BOY>

<I AM WHAT I AM>

ANNEKA TAKE THE BOY OUTSIDE

TALK TO HIM

WHAT'S ALL THIS, GENJIS' BUSINESS?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

YOU LOVE HIM?*

YES

AND YOU ARE *LOYAL* TO HIM?

I AM

THIS I DO NOT UNDERSTAND NEITHER DO I COMPREHEND MY FATHER'S ALLIANCE WITH THE MONSTROUS GENJIS.

ONCE, YOUR FATHER AND KOBE WERE CLOSE ALLIES THEN THEY WERE BITTER ENEMIES.

NOW, ONLY *THE PACT* KEEPS THE WORLD FROM A GREAT AND TERRIBLE *WAR*.

*ALL DIALOGUE TRANSLATED FROM KHITAN.--PAT

WHEN KOBE WAS A CHILD, HE WAS GIVEN TO THE EMPEROR OF KOTH AS A *SLAVE*

STRABONUS IN TURN GAVE KOBE TO CONAN.

KOBE FOUGHT AT CONAN'S SIDE FOR A SEASON. .

... YET THE BOND OF SLAVERY EVENTUALLY CAME BETWEEN THEM. KOBE TRIED ONCE TO *SEVER* THAT BOND

HE AND CONAN STRUGGLED ALMOST TO THE DEATH ... WITH INCONCLUSIVE RESULTS

"IN KOBE'S MIND, THE IMAGE OF HIS INDUCTION AS CONAN'S SLAVE REMAINED FIXED

"FOR LONG YEARS, HE SEARCHED FOR A SOLUTION.

"EVENTUALLY, KOBE'S FATHER DIED. KOBE ASSUMED LEADERSHIP OF THE YAGYU CLAN. CONAN USURPED NEMEDIDES'S THRONE.

"WAR SEEMED INEVITABLE

THUS, A *PACT* WAS FORGED INTO CONAN KOBE GAVE OUR FIRST BORN SON

'SYAN LIN IS TO BE CONAN'S *SLAVE*...

UNTIL *DEATH*.

OUR SON HAS *REPLACED* KOBE AS CONAN'S SLAVE AND SATISFIED THE HONOR BETWEEN THEM

"OUR SON IS ONE OF CONAN'S *BLACK DRAGONS*.. HIS ELITE PERSONAL FORCE

"SYAN LIN HAS NEVER KNOWN HIS FATHER.

'SO AS LONG AS SYAN LIN LIVES, THERE WILL BE PEACE'.

'SHOULD THE BOY DIE BY CONAN'S HAND"

WORLD WAR.

BUT .. HOW COULD YOU GIVE UP YOUR *SON*?

MY SACRIFICE IS WORTH THE SURVIVAL OF NATIONS KANG. DON'T YOU SEE--?

NO!

I *DON'T* SEE *AT ALL!!*

MY FATHER AND GENJIS INDISCRIMINATELY TOY WITH THE LIVES OF OTHERS!

MY AGENTS HAVE LOCA[illegible] YOUR SON, CONAN YOUR *TRUE* SON

. . .CONN

HE RIDES WITH A *REBEL FACTION* IN MY NATIVE LAND. I PLAN [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] SYA. THE *PACT CHILD*. THEN [illegible] *WAR*

THUS, WE HAVE A CONFLICT, LORD KING. YOUR SON THREATENS THE PEACE OF THE ENTIRE *WORLD*.

CONN HATES YOU FOR YOUR INDISCRETION WHICH PRODUCED KANG S[illegible] CONN SWEARS NEVER TO [illegible]

I SWEAR YOU LL SEEK NO RETALIATION...

...AND I SHALL KILL CONN AND CONSOLIDATE MY [illegible]

[illegible]

YOU DARE?!

YOU *DARE* MARCH IN HERE AND ASK PERMISSION

[illegible] *KILL SON?*

[illegible] *KING* NOW

CONSIDER YOUR POSITION!

A WAR BETWEEN US WOULD INVOLVE ALL THE WESTERN KINGS AND ALL THE EASTERN KINGS

MY HORDES WOULD SWEEP WESTWARD GATHERING MOMENTUM FROM THE TURANIANS AND HYRKANIANS.

YOUR OWN ALLIES WOULD BACK YOU ONLY UNTIL THEY SEE MY NATION APPROACHING!

NOT TO MENTION THE REBELLION FORMING UNDER TIMON FLAVIUS IN YOUR NORTHERN PROVINCES. YOU CAN COUNT ON THE GUNDERMEN AND THE PICTS JOINING *THEM*

NEITHER OF THEM HAVE ANY LOVE FOR AQUILONIA

SAVE YOUR THREATS, KHITAN!

TOUCH MY SON AND I'LL KILL YOU

THEN I'LL MARSHAL MY FORCES AND WIPE YOUR "NATION" OFF THE WORLD'S FACE!

WHY'S HE *SENSITIVE*, CONAN? AFTER ALL.

YOU'VE ANOTHER BOY *JUST LIKE* CONN

I'VE WAGED WAR AGAINST THAT [illegible]

YOU CAN'T DO IT, CONAN

I'M KING, PROTECTED BY AN ANCIENT PACT. I CAN DO ANYTHING.

AND I HAVE WITNESSED THE DEATH OF ANY WHO ATTACK MY LAND.

CONAN, THAT [illegible] IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE.

I WANT YOU TO KILL MY SON, PUBLIUS

WELL, CONAN, YOU'VE [illegible] DEAD ALL THESE MONTHS ANYWAY! WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

MALORIC--?

GOING AFTER KOBE IS SUICIDAL.

IT WILL LEAD TO THE [illegible]

THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY

BLAST YOUR EYES!!

I WANT THAT KHITAN'S HIDE!!

WHY DON'T I EMPLOY YOU [illegible]

FIND ME A SOLUTION [illegible]

THE DRAGONS AND I ARE GOING TO SETTLE THINGS WITH TIMON FLAVIUS...AND END THI[illegible]

IN ANOTHER CHAMBER.

〈YOU *BLACK DRAGONS* DRESS LIKE *ASSASSINS*!〉

〈OURS IS NOT TO PROMOTE *GOOD WILL*, KANG SHO.〉

〈IF THAT *WERE* YOUR MISSION YOU OF ALL PEOPLE WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO ACCOMPLISH IT.〉

〈YOU THE *SON* OF *GENGIS*!〉

〈I DO NOT KNOW MY FATHER.〉

〈ANY MORE THAN *YOU* KNOW YOURS, KANG.〉

〈*AQUILONIA* IS MY HOME, KANG... AS MUCH AS *KHITAI* IS YOURS.〉

〈YOU AND I HAVE *MUCH* IN COMMON. IT IS *ILLOGICAL* THAT WE SHOULD BE AT ODDS WITH ONE ANOTHER!〉

〈I SUGGEST YOU NOT BE SO QUICK TO JUDGE, KANG SHO AND YET, I SUPPOSE YOU WOULD BE PRONE TO BE THUS.〉

〈...THAT BEING A MAJOR TRAIT OF YOUR *FATHER*.〉

SEVERAL NIGHTS LATER.

COMING TO BED, *TIMON*...?

IN A *MOMENT*, LOVE. I MUST PLOT TOMORROW'S STRATEGIES.

GOOD NIGHT MY SON. MAY YOU IN YOUR LIFETIME, KNOW ONLY *PEACE*.

MAY OUR SON NEVER KNOW THE HORROR OF NECESSARY BLOODSHED

HE IS WHAT THIS REBELLION IS ABOUT, WIFE.

HE IS WHY I STRUGGLE DAY AND NIGHT TO FREE US FROM AQUILONIA'S TYRANNY.

TIMON! I'M GOING ABOUT MY NIGHTLY ROUNDS!

HAVE YOU A WORD FOR THE MEN?

AYE-

--TELL THEM THE ALLIANCE GROWS AND THE FATE OF NATIONS IS IN OUR HANDS

"THE FATE OF NATIONS", EH?

I'D SETTLE FOR A WARM FLAGON OF CIDER

WHA--?

SIMON DEAD!!

WAIT-- BEHIND

MITRA

CHUNK

<MY LIEGE>

<MESSY, IN THERE>

THE PERIMETER IS OURS, MY LORD.

BRING THE DRAGON IN TO THE EAST WING TARQUIN

AS YOU WISH, MY LORD.

<HOW HOW DID...?>

<LATER>

THEY MOVE

STORM...

AND THEN .

KERAACK!

WHAT--?

GODS! 'TIS THE KING!

THE KING.

I'D HEARD HE WAS BIG BUT.

FLAVIUS!

WHERE IS YOUR DOG-LEADER?

THIS NIGHT HE SHALL PAY FOR HIS CRIMES!!

WE'LL CUT THESE IDIOTS DOWN SO WE CAN *GET* TO HIM!

SAVE FLAVIUS FOR *ME!*

WHA CONAN?!

CONN-- *STOP HIM!!*

OUT OF MY WAY, YOU CLUMSY OAF!!

YOU *ARE* A COUNTERFEIT

AND A *POOR* ONE AT THAT!

GOT TO GET AWAY

MAKE IT TO THE HILLS ..

..GOT TO KEEP THE REBELLION ALIVE . . FOR AEMILIUS..

. . FOR MY SON

MITRA

ARMORER! KNITANST'

KOBE, YOU ARROGANT SON OF A SHE-DOG--

--WHO INVITED YOU?

'URRKK'''

(S- SIRE

(HAVE MERC)

-'HUFF HUFF'-

(MERCY WILL BRING MY EMPIRE DOWN AROUND MY *ANKLES*, BOY.)

(THIS DO DECLARED *WAR* ON ME.)

(*THIS* IS THE *REWARD* OF SUCH ACTIONS.)

(YOU'RE, *RUTHLESS*... SAVAGE

(JUST LIKE GENJUS')

(AND YOU'RE NOTHING AT ALL LIKE *MY SON*)

NOW JUST WHAT THE BLAZES ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

MY PARTY AND I CAME TO ASSIST YOU IN YOUR EFFORTS TO ROUTE THE REBEL FACTION, LORD KING.

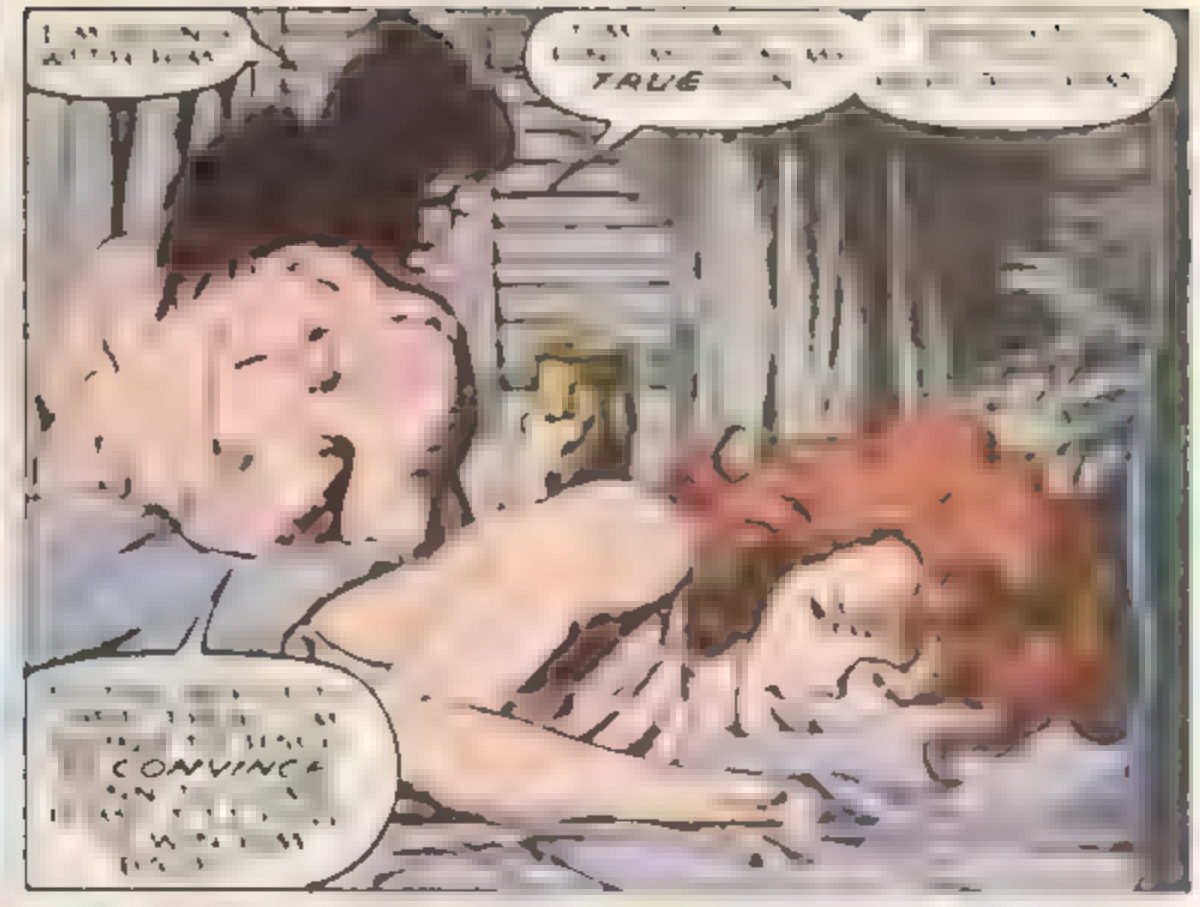
CONSIDER IT A PROFESSIONAL COURTESY.

--EXTENDED IN THE INTEREST OF WORLD PEACE.

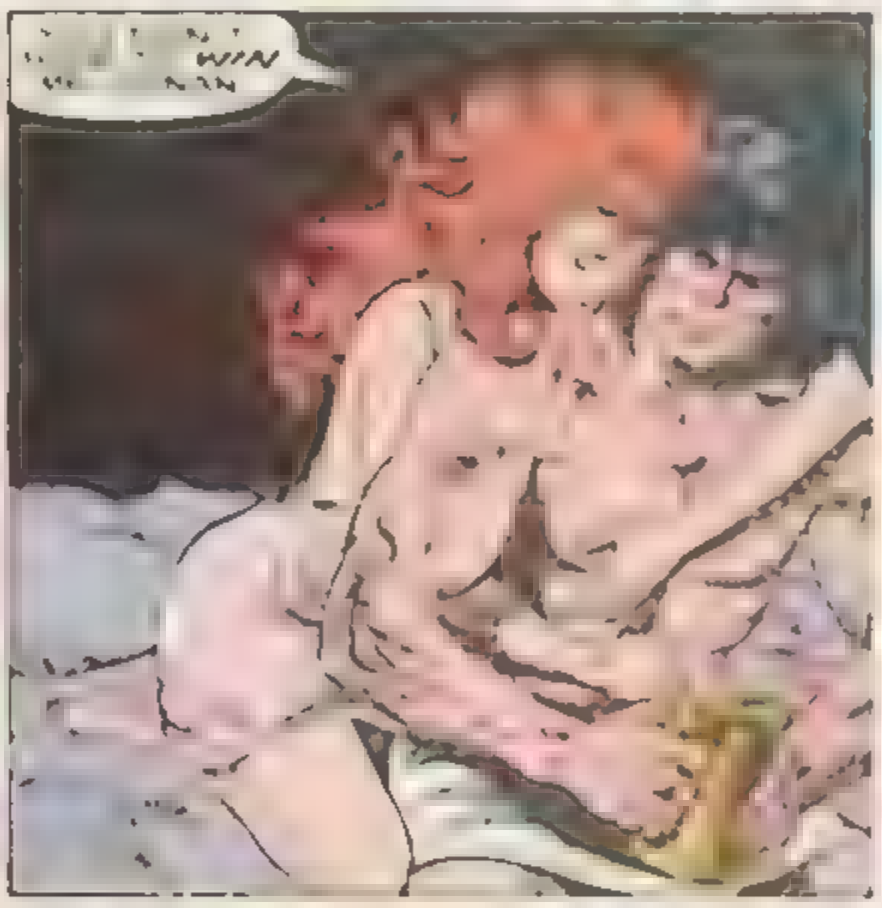
I TRUST MY EFFORTS HAVE NOT BEEN IN VAIN

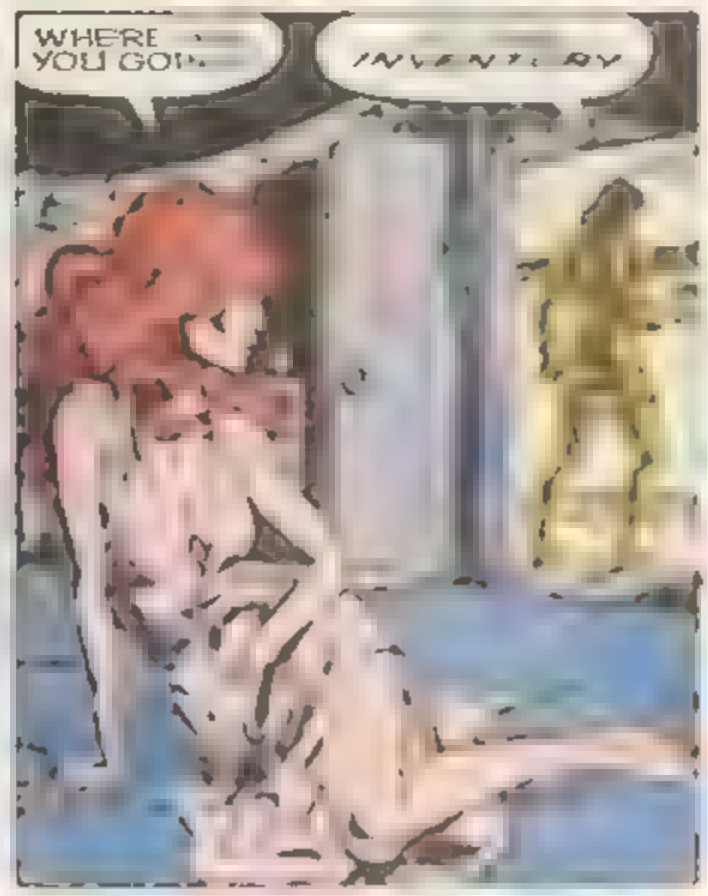
NO, KHITAN. THEY HAVEN'T

WIN


TRUE

YOU


WIN


WHERE YOU GOIN
INVENTORY

PRINCESS RADIGUND IS A DELICATE FLOWER AFLICKER IN LIGHT FLUMBAGION THAT LEAVES THE SOUR CONAN'S SOUR

HE LOVES HER MORE THAN SHE WILL EVER KNOW

PRINCE TAURUS'S MAJOR CRIME IS THAT HE WAS BORN AFTER CONN CONAN HAS TAKEN LITTLE INTEREST IN THE BOY

IT'S TOO LATE TO START NOW

OF THE THREE CHILDREN WHO SLEEP WITHIN THE CASTLE'S WALLS CONAN CANNOT FIND ONE WHO CAN TAKE CONN'S PLACE IN HIS LIFE.

THUS, THE MATTERS SETTLED.

HE'LL NOT REST UNTIL CONN RETURNS HOME WITH HIM.

CLICK!

WHEW!

THAT WAS CLOSE!

YOU CAN COME OUT NOW

WOULDN'T WANT FATHER TO FIND OUT I'VE FOUND A STYGIAN PEASANT BOY WANDERING THE CASTLE GROUNDS!

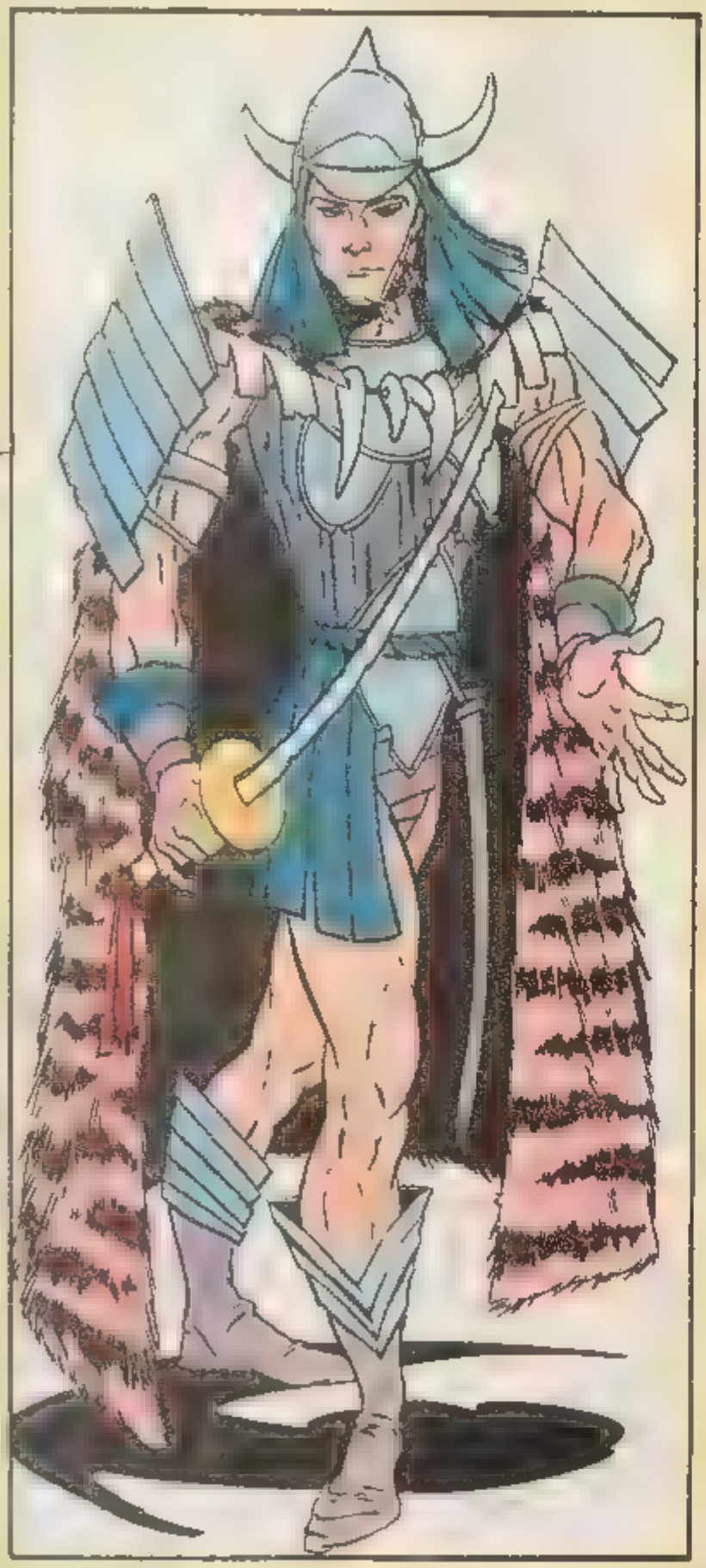
NOW LET'S YOU AND I PLOT SOME EVIL MISCHIEF AGAINST AQUILONIA'S KING...

UNBEKNOWNST TO THE PRINCE, THIS IS NO ORDINARY BOY IT IS AN EVIL CREATURE OF IMMENSE POWER WHO COMES FROM A MYSTIC NETHER-REALM FAR BEYOND THE BLACK VOID

SOON, THE CREATURE WILL KILL A KING...

NEXT: THE SECRET OF THE LITTLE STYGIAN BOY! THE SECRET OF MALORIC'S WIZARD! THE SECRET OF THE DEVIL PRIEST'S KEY! ALL THIS AND TAURUS WRECKS THE CASTLE! DON'T DARE MISS

NIGHT WAR!



For such is the nature of Man; that in time of great need is born the desire for a saviour. So it was in the dark days of Khitai.

As the marauding hordes of GENJIS lay waste to countless villages, a prophesy of hope spread like wild-fire among the peasant folk that a warrior would come to deliver them from their misery.

It was the Dawn of the Tiger-Lord.
It was the time of——

KIRAKHAN.

Story—A.S. Blaustein
Pencils—Dale Eaglesham
Inks/Color—Pat Redding
Letters—Jim Novak

THE TORCH SPUTTERS FOR AIR, AS ITS WARM, QUIVERING LIGHT FAINTLY DANCES ACROSS THE ABUNDANT WEALTH STREWN CARELESSLY ABOUT THE FLOOR. THIS IS THE KING'S TREASURY.

MITRA!

THESE TWO YOUNG LADS ARE THE KING'S SONS.

THEY HAVE NEVER BEFORE ENTERED THIS ROOM.

THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE ENTERED NOW!

I LIKE TH S NOT, TAURUS. I THINK WE HAD BEST LEAVE--

NONSENSE! YOU, MY BROTHER CONN, ARE CROWN PRINCE OF AQUILONIA! ONE DAY ALL THIS WEALTH WILL BE--AHEM--YOURS!

YOU M GHT AS WELL BECOME ACQUA.NTED WITH .T NOW! AND YOU DO W SH TO LOOK YOUR F.NEST FOR THE HARVEST FESTIVAL TONIGHT, HMMM?

WELL, YES--BUT--

AHHHH! HERE IT IS HERE .T .S--FATHER'S CEREMONIAL HELM I TOLD YOU IT WAS HERE!

TAURUS! YOU REALLY SHOULDN T TOUCH THAT!

OH, REALLY, BROTHER--HE NEVER WEARS .T HONESTLY YOU ARE SUCH A BORE!

FEEL THE POWER OF KINGSHIP!

TAURUS!

HELP ME, YOU FOOL! THE HELM IS STUCK--I CAN'T SEE!

SO SORRY DEAR BROTHER--QUICKLY, TAKE HOLD OF TH S SWORD!

KRAUH

OOOOOPS! MY M STAKE! I'M TRULY SORRY, BROTHER. DO YOU REQUIRE ANY ASSISTANCE IN GETTING TO YOUR FEET?

NO.

--AND FURTHER-MORE, IF YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN TALK ME INTO CONTINUING TH S FARCE YOU ARE VERY MUCH M STAKEN.

AND SO

WELL WELL BROTHER-- YOU CERTAINLY CUT QUITE A DASHING FIGURE MY, MY-- BUT DON'T I ENVY YOU!

ALL HAIL, THE CROWN PRINCE OF AQUILONIA! LONG LIVE CONAN!

I THANK THEE, TAURUS! SITTING ATOP MY FATHER'S GREAT WARHORSE. I AT LAST KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE HIM!

ONWARD, NOBLE BEAST! HO!

THE GREAT WARHORSE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THE SUBTLE WAYS OF MAN. IT CANNOT SENSE THE CONCEPTS OF BLOOD LINE AND PRINCELY RIGHTS. IT KNOWS NOTHING OF KINGS

THE DUMB BEAST KNOWS ONLY THE FEEL OF ITS RIDER.

YOUNG PRINCE CONAN SEES ONLY NOT HIS FATHER AND THE HORSE WILL ALLOW NO OTHER TO RIDE

MITRA! HELLLPP MEEEEEEEE!

OH GODS, THIS IS WONDERFUL!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

PLEASE--

--STOP--

--PLEASE--

--STOP--

--PLEASE--

--STOP--

--PLEASE--

--STOP--

PLEEAARRRGGHHHHH!

THE YOUNG PRINCE IS THROWN LIKE A CHILD'S DOLL INTO THE DUST--

--JUST IN TIME TO SEE HIS YOUNGER BROTHER RUN AWAY AS IF THE MOUNTAIN GOD, CROM, WERE CHASING HIM.

:AHEM:

:ULP:

HELLO, FATHER--

--ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN--

BAP

YRIK

SO! NOW MY FATHER HAS COME TO PLAGUE ME EVEN IN MY DREAMS!

HE TAUNTS ME WHILE I LIE SLEEPING IN THE VERY LAND WHERE HE BETRAYED OUR FAMILY!

HE STAINED MY MOTHER'S HONOR FOR A NIGHT'S PLEASURE WITH A WOMAN FROM KHITAI!

I DESPISE MY FATHER AND I DESPISE KHITAI!

SO WHY AM I HERE, AND WHY CAN I THINK OF NOTHING BUT HIM?

I HAVE BEEN ALONE IN THE JUNGLE FOR MANY DAYS I FEEL SO--

EH?

THE YOUNG PRINCE REACTS STRONGLY TO THE SMELL.

IT IS THE SMELL OF SMOKE IT IS THE SMELL OF DEATH HE FINDS HIMSELF DRAWN, INEXORABLY, TOWARDS ITS SOURCE--

A CHARRED HUSK OF A SMALL FISHING VILLAGE

THE SIGNS OF THE WARRIOR-HORDES OF GENJIS ARE ALL OVER THE TINY VILLAGE.. RUIN AND DESOLATION HANG HEAVY IN THE AIR THE UNSPEAKABLE STENCH OF BURNT BODIES RIPS INTO THE PRINCE'S NOSTRILS WITH ITS CAUSTIC HORROR.

THE PRINCE HIMSELF IS WEAK WITH HUNGER HE IS TIRED PERHAPS HE THINKS HE WILL LIE HERE HE WILL FALL ASLEEP, AND NEVER WAKING UP, WILL JOIN THE QUIET DEAD OF THIS HUMBLE VILLAGE..

EH?

..IT IS SO.

..BEAJTIFUL

KIRAKHAN!

KIRAKHAN!

KIRAKHAN!

KIRAKHAN!

KIRAKHAN KIRAKHAN KIRAKHAN

WHAT IN MITRA'S NAME IS--

I AM BHOSK.

WELL, YOU'RE A BIG ONE, LAD. I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.

SO BE IT! IF I M TO DIE, LET IT BE FIGHTING! LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT, BHOSK OF KHITAI!

I AM BHOSK!

YOU ARE GOING TO SAVE US, AREN'T YOU--

--KIRAKHAN?

AIEEEEE, IT'S BACK! IT'S BACK!

HELP US, KIRAKHAN!

HMMMPH--THAT S NOUGHT BUT A MANGEY JUNGLE-CAT!

A HALF STARVED ONE AT THAT!

'TIS NOT STARVING! IT HAS GORGED ITSELF ON OUR PEOPLE FOR SEVERAL DAYS NOW!

IF YOU WOULD BE OUR SAVIOUR --YOU WOULD DO WELL WITH THIS!

OLD MAN--YOUR CAT IS BUT THE DEAD, WALKING.

RRRROWWWR!

MOTHER OF MITRA!

GRRRR

:UHNNNNNG:

THOUGH HE IS IN TRUTH THE SON OF A BARBARIAN, THE CROWN PRINCE IS A STRANGER TO SUCH BESTIAL FURY AS DWELLS WITHIN THE HEART OF THIS SABER-TOOTHED DEMON!

IT IS A FURY BORN OF THE NEED TO SURVIVE.

A FURY THAT WILL NOT DIE.

WILL HE DIE, MOMMY?

ENOUGH!

grrrrrrrrrrr

--LONG WAY FROM HOME, AREN'T YOU BOY?

SO AM I.

I AM SORRY--

SKRESH

--YOU ARE DEAD!

IN SUCH A CONTEST OF WILLS THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE SURVIVOR.

CONN SHIVERS AS HE THINKS OF HIS FATHER--SO MUCH LIKE THE NOBLE SAVAGE HE HAS JUST SLAIN.

SPIRITS BE PRAISED --YOU ARE OUR SAVIOUR!

THE SPIRITS OF THE LAKE DO NOT LIE-- YOU ARE KIRAKHAN, THE TIGER-LORD.

IT IS YOU THAT WILL LEAD US TO SAFETY --AWAY FROM THE HORDES OF GENJIS!

I DO NOT BELIEVE IN PROPHESIES, OLD MAN.

WE ARE POOR AND DEFENSELESS--WOULD YOU LEAVE US TO DIE?

IT IS MORNING.

THE SUN RISES ABOVE THE DISTANT MOUNTAIN, ILLUMINATING A RITUAL OF TRUST.

IT IS THE DAWN OF THE TIGER-LORD.

THE APPOINTING OF A CHAMPION.

IN AQUILONIA'S ROYAL PALACE, THE CROWN PRINCE HAD HIS CHOICE OF THE FINEST OF ARMOR AND WEAPONS.

WHY THEN DOES HE FEEL UNWORTHY OF THE BATTERED, RUSTY WEAPONS, AND PIECE MEAL ARMOR NOW OFFERED TO HIM WITH SUCH SOLEMNITY?

PERHAPS IT IS THE NAKED TRUST THAT THESE POOR VILLAGERS HAVE PLACED IN HIM.

CONN WONDERS IF HIS FATHER, THE KING, HAS EVER KNOWN SUCH TRUST.

THE TRUST A BABY HAS IN ITS MOTHER--

--THE TRUST A MOTHER HAS IN HER HUSBAND.

IT IS A TRUST THAT SHOULD NEVER BE BETRAYED.

NEVER.

HE IS TSINJE-NUSHAN--A WARRIOR-PRIEST--A REBEL OVERLORD.

HE SERVES NO MASTER BUT HIMSELF. HE SERVES NO CAUSE BUT HIS OWN.

LORD TSINJE!

¡ULP!

KRAKK

HE DETESTS INTERRUPTIONS.

THIS HAD *BEST* BE IMPORTANT, KENJE.

IT *IS* IMPORTANT.

LORD TSINJE THROWS HIS HEAD BACK, AS HIS SINISTER LAUGHTER FILLS THE CHILL NIGHT AIR.

HE HAS JUST LEARNED THE *TRUE* NATURE OF THE YOUNG AQUILONIAN BOY, WHO UNTIL RECENTLY SERVED WITH HIS REBEL BAND.

THIS BOY IS NONE OTHER THAN *CONN*, *SON OF THE BARBARIAN KING OF AQUILONIA!*

IT IS WITH GOOD REASON THAT TSINJE LAUGHS--FOR WHOEVER HAS THE BOY WILL HOLD *KHITAI* IN HIS LEFT HAND, AND *AQUILONIA* IN HIS RIGHT!--AND TSINJE WILL *HAVE THE BOY!*

TO BE CONTINUED...